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Dear STB Commissioners,

The short sighted, counterproductive proposal to limit the total available time in which a railbanking agreement can be negotiated to only three years (Docket #EP_749_1) will only limit the number of railbanking projects that can be approved over time. This proposal seems designed to sabotage the spirit and intent of the Northern California Great Redwood Trail Act - SB-1029. The public stands to lose access by forcing rail lines to be abandoned when railbanking could be achieved with less restrictive deadlines.

The Surface Transportation Board should instead set a deadline that prevents negotiations from continuing endlessly. A ten-year limit on trail agreement negotiations would allow all the complex layers of agreement and financing that are often part of rail-to-trail agreements to be completed, while still providing parties a real deadline to force final action.

The Northcoast Environmental Center is a strong advocate for Northern California's Great Redwood Trail. We are excited by the opportunities railbanking the old Northwestern Pacific rail line offers our region for non-motorized transportation, recreation, and tourism. While we would like to see the transition happen quickly, we understand that such projects require time and careful planning to succeed, and we do not want to force an arbitrary timeline that hampers our ability to successfully implement railbanking and trail development.

Railbanking has helped to protect thousands of miles of railroad right of way while providing crucial recreational and transportation alternatives to Americans across the country. Please support a reasonable timeline for achieving railbanking as envisioned by the Great Redwood Trail Act.

Larry Glass
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